Vital Points Touching the Public Schools of a Large City

AN ADDRESS

BEFORE

The Public Education Association

OF THE

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BY

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PRESIDENT DRAPER

President Andrew S. Draper, of the University of Illinois, has had an unusual educational experience. He was born on a farm in central New York, and first attended a primitive, one-room, country school. From seven to fifteen years of age he attended a city graded school. Then he attended and graduated from an "Old Line Academy," the Albany Academy. He taught a year in the Academy, and afterwards was principal of a graded school in a country town. Taking the course in the Albany Law School he was graduated, admitted to the bar, and practiced law for fifteen years. In the meantime he was a member of the Board of Education of the City of Albany and trustee of the New York State Normal College. He also became a member of the New York Legislature, and served as one of the judges of the United States Court which heard the individual claims against the Geneva Award. In 1886 he was elected by the New York Legislature on joint ballot to the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and served two terms, or six years. In this capacity he was a regent of the University of the State of New York, and a trustee of Cornell University. From 1892 to 1894 he was Superintendent of Instruction of the Cleveland, Ohio, public schools, with the sole power to appoint and remove teachers. In 1894 he was called to the presidency of the University of Illinois, which at that time had ninety in the Faculty, and 755 students, and which now has 315 in the Faculty, and 3,250 students. In 1889 the degree of LL. D. was conferred upon President Draper by Colgate University, and in 1903 by Columbia University.

Vital Points Touching the Public Schools of a Large City.

Mr. President and Ladies and Gentlemen:

For the invitation to come and treat of public school interests in this great, thrifty, historic city, I tender to the Public School Association my cordial thanks. I have responded to your call willingly, for the subject is fascinating to me, and I would not withhold any aid which I may give; but I may say truly that I have come with misgivings, for there is little which I may say which has not been said better many times before.

I would hold out no unwarranted implications. I know little of the school affairs of your city. I have seen some statements in the daily press from time to time which went to show that some matters were altogether wrong, and I should not expect it otherwise, for we have not yet entered the halcyon days which justify expectation of perfect organization and ideal administration of such a trust as the educational system of a mighty city. Very likely more matters are wrong, and more thoroughly wrong, than they ought to be. Even so, it would doubtless be much farther from the truth to conclude that all things are wrong.

Beyond a peradventure the truth here, as in other great cities, is that there are good men, and weak men, and possibly bad men, in the Board of Education; that there is an organization ill adapted to the proper management of the business in hand; that there are hundreds of capable and conscientious teachers struggling against a system which they think unappreciative and unjust; and that there are other teachers working for nothing but their monthly stipend, and without any sense of the real fascination in a teacher's work; and that the whole situation is unsatisfactory to the public,

and particularly to the patrons of the schools, because they know there are some evils and weaknesses in the case, and because too much is undertaken, and too much of what is attempted is not understood.

CONFIDENCE

The very cornerstone of a satisfactory school system is public confidence and pride in it. If there is suspicion that there is venality in the school board, or that members are making political plunder of the most sacred common interests; that the superintendent's office is not equal to its high trust, or is run down by opposing forces which it cannot control; that some of the teaching is worthless, and some of the work meaningless; there can be little hope until these things are cleared up, and it is commonly the case that they cannot be cleared up except through an indignant outburst and a revolution. If there is want of public confidence, and if peaceful remedies cannot be enforced, there had better be a revolution. Nothing can be accomplished until a situation is developed in which the people believe.

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Much, very much indeed, depends upon the spirit, and outlook, upon the policies which prevail as a matter of course and without comment, in the Board of Education. There is no other public position in which a qualified man, with a spirit that rings true, may render such important public service as upon a school board; and there is no other in which the other kind may make such an everlasting hindrance and nuisance of himself.

The position is in a peculiar way prolific of misunderstandings and temptation. I do not refer to temptations to commit crimes. A few men may get into school boards only to prove that they ought to be in jails, but the percentage is exceedingly small. By far the greater number mean well enough, and if they stay long enough many of them get educated up to a sane and competent public service.

It never seems to occur to any American citizen that he may not be qualified for service on a school board. He went to school once: does he not know all about the schools? He may never have acquired or managed any property in his life; but does he not know just how to care for the millions in charge of a school board? He may never have built a house of his own in all his days; but does he not know just how and just where to build the next schoolhouse? He may not have been in a schoolhouse in thirty years; but does he not know just what ought to be done and how it ought to be done? Superintendents and teachers are a good enough sort of folks, according to his ideas, but they are narrow and know little of affairs and need superintending and teaching by some one right fresh from the people. He has a wrinkle in his head that there is a vast lot of nonsense in the schools and that their work needs reforming directly from headquarters. Moreover, the town must know that he is of some importance, and the way to have that understood is by getting jobs for friends who want them. It may make him available for the legislature. Quiet, competent, sympathetic and stimulating service may go all unnoticed. He must have individuality and make an impression. It is to be made by lording it over everybody under the control of the board who does not sue at his court, and by losing no opportunity to reconstruct everything that was ever done before he came.

It is not said that all school directors are of this stamp; it is said that enough of them are to keep most school systems on edge. School systems are sensitive institutions. One self-conceited man may stir up more in a school system in a month than a half dozen discerning men can build up in a year.

Even the purely business side of school administration demands special knowledge. A modern schoolhouse is a development. The location, the construction, or the care of one claims the unbiased and serious judgment of men who have learned much, but not so much that they are unwilling to learn much more. The adjustment of salaries is a delicate

matter, which reaches to the very heart of things. The judgment which can control the purchase of supplies, and keep out all scandals, will have to be a sharp and alert, an experienced and balanced one. The character which can level up the revenues of the schools to the needs and means of a community, which can secure enough money to ensure results which appeal to the common pride, and then can spend it so wisely as to get those results and meet the exactions of men who know the value of money is a character which already has some successes to its credit, and did not begin to think about school problems yesterday.

If the business side of school administration calls for some special knowledge, the instructional side demands infinitely more. The laying out of the course of study, the creation of a pedagogical atmosphere, the development of a happy, enthusiastic and self-respecting body of teachers, and the making of an organization which will inspire pupils, give latent genius its chance and assure the just rights of all the parents and children in a great city, is the heavy task of a man of good heart and quick mind, who has given years of serious study to the problems involved and who is too sane to be a doctrinaire, who can recognize merit and do justice, who has been seasoned by contact with affairs and can endure much, but who knows where the vital points are and will not let them be trampled upon by the rough foot of political or official power, and who, if necessity arises, can go straight to the people with a case which will command respect. The man who can do this is an expert so rare that in this country of eighty millions of people there is hardly one of him in a million; with our fast growing cities there are not enough like him to go around.

I am not overlooking the importance of popular influence upon the instructional work of the schools. The best of superintendents and teachers are made better by the community feeling, if it is expressed through men and women who really represent discretion, the sense of justice and the sympathetic feeling of the people. The schools cannot be

efficient and adaptable without it. The ideal arrangement is a scholarly, experienced, sane and conscientious superintendent, working in accord with a board of genuine men and women who truly stand for the better intelligence of both the operators and the wage earners of the community. Such a board and such a superintendent, discussing the interests of the schools in quiet tones, without excitement because without selfishnesss, constitute a force in the life of a people which claims the best efforts of all who have a shade of civic pride or the least interest in the progress of the mass.

THE TEACHING FORCE

Boards of education are appointed and buildings erected and superintendents employed to the end that the children of a city may be taught. There is teaching as clear and as full of sparkle and progress as a mountain stream, and there is teaching as dense and heavy and lifeless as an old log which has fallen across that stream and is going back to earth again. It all depends upon the teachers. And the teachers depend upon the system and upon the forces which give tone and strength and energy to the system.

The teachers are for the most part women. It is not so in other lands, but it is so and it is going to be so here. I am sorry for a boy who has no other teacher but a woman, no matter how good a woman or how good a teacher she may be, but it is better so than that his teacher shall be a narrow or effeminate man, and the alternative seems inevitable. Women teachers are more conscientious and more sensitive than men. They are specially responsive to the tone and spirit and ideals of a school system. This is true whether the tone is good or bad, or the ideals high or low. They are not only quickly responsive but they are keen in their perceptions and intuitions. It is a fact which has great potentiality in it and it is to be reckoned with.

If the women teachers of a city can know that merit will be appreciated, and that promotion will be its reward, they will act upon the knowledge with even more impulsiveness

and energy than men. If culture commands recognition and artistic teaching gains approval they will grow in culture and in power. If even-handed justice prevails, they will work quietly and steadily, content to bide their time and take their chance.

And platitudes will not deceive them. They know what is going on at headquarters even when they are not there, and even in the face of denials, for the evidences are unmistakable and the knowledge at once becomes common throughout the whole system. They will look upon the advance of an associate without heartburnings where there is reasonable ground for it. But if appointments are brought about through influence, if one who cannot teach fares better than one who can, if promotions turn upon favoritism, they will either sink discouraged into a lifeless and heartless routine or their impulsiveness and intensiveness will lead them to even more unconscionable lengths than most men will go, to reach the ends which unconscionable practices may gain.

Teaching is of little worth if it is not free. It cannot be free in the hands of untrained persons who follow it only for a living. Nor can it be free in the hands of teachers soured by injustice. It cannot be free in the hands of one who relies upon some kind of secret influence to keep her in place. For such there must be rules and much governing and directing to prevent wrongs which even a long-suffering public will not stand.

A school system is no stronger than its weakest part. If there is one opening in the dyke which some one with ample authority is not trying vehemently to close, enough water will rush in to wash everything down to the dead level of indifference and mediocrity.

A school system is a thing of life. It is a wonderfully sensitive thing. It does not long stand still. It is steadily growing finer and stronger or coarser and weaker. If conditions prevail which breed jealousy and bitterness, the case is hopeless until they are completely removed, or at least until

it is well understood that the way is opening for their removal.

THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE

The public point of view is too often overlooked by the men and women of the schools. The most cherished desire in a parent's heart is that his children may be better educated than he was. For this no sacrifices are too heavy for him. To this end he will labor with music in his soul and find abundant recompense in the intellectual progress of his household. But sometimes he wonders. He hears much of modern educational theories and of surprising methods in the schools. He is made to know that of the making of school-books there is no end. He is by no means an ignorant man; he has read and worked, and such men know some things. But he hears things through his children that he never heard of before. He must not doubt the superior knowledge of the schools, however, and he puts away his incredulity. By and by something happens which makes it necessary for him to see the teacher, and then he finds himself in contact with a force which is of the utmost moment to him, but which is indifferent to his rights or powerless to assure them.

A mother of refinement sends her children to the public schools. The family circumstances hardly warrant sending them to private schools, and beyond that she has some patriotic sentiment about the matter. She wants to believe in the public schools and support them. She, moreover, wants to be on terms with the teacher of her children to the end that she may give commendation and support where it is due, and that they may work understandingly together. To her surprise she finds a woman far below her standards of womanly sympathy, tact and culture. She cannot subject her girls to such an influence and such teaching as that. But what is she to do? If she seeks remedy she is more than likely to find that there is none.

It has often seemed to me that there is no sort of a civic or political organization in this country so fortified against the enforcement of a citizen's right as a school organization which

has grown to large proportions on the old lines and has not yet been brought to terms of centralized authority and responsibility. You may start out to redress a wrong which is wearing your life at its best parts. It is not a question of public policy, but of an individual citizen's right. You commence with the teacher; she refers you to the principal; he advises you to see the supervisor; that official passes you along to the superintendent; he would likely aid you if he could, but he knows very well he cannot, and suggests that you carry the matter to a trustee or a committee; and there you are told that it is a matter for the whole board, and the board is utterly beyond you. If the truth were told, you are thwarted, your rights are denied by reason of political or personal influence, which is not only ignorant and selfish, but resentful and spiteful. Anyone in official position who opposes it is likely to feel its fang. And the whole thing is so arranged that no one dare help you; no one has the authority to help you; and no one who refuses you justice in a just cause can be called to account for it.

It is not implied that the men and women along this official line you have traveled are all vicious. There is wickedness somewhere in the business, but these people would, for the most part, be glad to be released from it. The trouble is in the fact that the system is more irresponsible and vicious than the people are who administer it. It is hospitable to flagrant and insidious evils which no power short of the legislative power of the state, or the aroused and indignant political power of a community can drive out.

Our fathers were more accustomed than we are to call the schools "the common schools." It was a good term; it grew out of a fact, and it implied much. It would be well to go back to the name and give new emphasis to the fact. If the schools are to become the schools of the poor who can afford no other, if they are to become the schools of the unfortunate who do not know their rights or cannot assert them, if they are to irritate the well-to-do, who must support them without direct benefits, if they are to make for the segrega-

tion of classes rather than serve as a bond of union between all citizens, then a unique and cherished ideal of our democratic life is being overthrown, and an evil day is coming upon us.

We will not believe it. Our democracy has harder problems than in the days of our fathers, but we understand those problems more clearly and are better able to meet them than they. The shaping and the management of institutions by the people must encounter some difficulties that would never appear to a minister or a cabinet, but in the end it is better. The popular will is slower than the will of one man in acting, but when it does act it is more forceful, more steadfast, more pervasive. The exercise of the democratic principle is educative in itself. The mass slowly, steadily, rises to the enforcement of principles which it accepts. Democracy learns to do by doing.

Educational equality, schools common to all, at whatever pains and at whatever cost, is a doctrine universally accepted in America. The people will make that doctrine a living fact in our democratic life. It is being put to its severest test in the great cities where such vast amounts are involved and greed is so rampant, where so many teachers are required and the children are so unlike, but even those cities are rising to their great task, and they will be no exception to the universal rule.

New and higher standards are appearing in the school systems of our largest cities. Look upon the stately and healthful buildings of the newer type, good enough for the very best, and therefore good enough for all. The City of New York has not always been in a position to claim commendation for the situation and the work of its schools, but that city has in the last two or three years made a notable contribution to the architecture, the hygiene, and the decoration of the large city schoolhouse. And I would not imply that that is the measure of its contribution. There is abundant reason to believe that its early contribution, under a capable and free superintendent, to the organization and the

administration of the schools will be no less notable. What is possible in that city of rampant and unclean politics is quite possible in any other American city.

But it is possible only through an understanding by the citizen of what he ought to expect and what his rights are in the schools, and then through agitation and combination which will secure needed legislation and an organization which will make those things possible.

WHAT TO DEMAND

Every citizen is bound to demand that within easy reach of his door there shall be a school building which is substantial, attractive and healthful. He has the right to expect that in that building there shall be a corps of teachers of capacity and culture, with teaching power and quick interest in his child. Refinement, truth, strength, industry and patriotism must all grow under that roof. He has the right to expect that that building and those teachers shall be free from partisan or sectarian influence, and that all that is done there shall bind all good citizens together in a patriotic league and make for the intellectual and ethical quickening of society. If in any particular it is not so, he has the right to know just where he may go to an experienced and capable officer, with ample authority, responsible to nobody but the community he serves, the law which sustains him, and the intelligence and conscience which guide him, and have immediate attention to his complaint and quick redress, if his complaint be a reasonable one.

HOW TO GET IT

If this is not already so, it is to be brought about through direct appeals to the people until the common sentiment is quickened to a revolt, and then through a school organization which differentiates legislative and executive functions, which gives business matters to business men, and instructional matters to teachers, which centralizes authority and responsibility for doing things in individuals, and is amply protected against influence.

We have less confidence in the crowd than we ought. The men and women who have descended from the earlier American families are not the only ones who are interested in the American schools. Nor are the men and women who live in costly houses the only ones interested in the schools by any means. It often happens that one of the new families has a keener appreciation of school privileges than one of the old families, and that the strongest supporters of the school system are the men who live in moderate circumstances. Sectarianism cannot come into the schools, but there is no reason why the interests of the schools shall not be carried to the religious denominations. A public school talk at a Presbyterian club, or a Methodist league, or a Roman Catholic lyceum is often welcome and always counts. A discussion of the true interests of the common schools before a labor union always develops a quick interest and often an aggressive response. Gatherings of the people in the schoolhouses germinate public school enthusiasm and strengthen the foundations of the school system. You may often see things which make you doubt, but there is virtue and honest desire among the people, and if you agitate the mass, the good and true will come to the surface, and if you gather and direct it, it will bear down the combined forces of evil.

There is to be no politics in the schools, but the interests of the schools must often go into assemblages where politics is rampant. The schools are very commonly administered by men and women who are in official position as the result of political action and partisan choice. It often happens that these people do things which they would not do if they were free. Public sentiment must set up standards and create an organization which will not only free them but punish them if they put the law on sale or make plunder of sacred rights.

I am a partisan. I believe in politics. I know the need of organization. But if the men who make such boast of party loyalty without being as true as I am to principles for which the party stands, if the men who give their days and

nights to managing "the organization" and seem to think that party machinery is to be supported by plundering the whole people, do not take their hands off the public schools and help on legislation which will give the common schools their best opportunity, I would take all the chances of throwing my vote and of bearing a hand at politics in a way which they would be very quick to understand. A small measure of manhood independence, a reasonable exercise of a freeman's right has a surprising effect in the back room of a political machine.

LINES OF ACTION

But no matter how much sentiment may be aroused, it must act upon rational lines. A few men of good standing who have thought things out to a conclusion and can marshall the facts and the reasons in ways which appeal to public sentiment, and who know how to enable public sentiment to have its way are of more moment in the educational affairs of a great city than thousands of indignant and unorganized men who do not know just what they want and do not see how to get something which will be of advantage to them.

The school system of the city of Philadelphia is not wholly or exclusively an affair of the city of Philadelphia. It is a matter, and a very large matter, of the State of Pennsylvania. The interest of the whole State is immediate, and the authority of the whole State is imperative. The school system rests upon the high power of taxation, and that power is exercised by act of the Legislature which sits at Harrisburg. The power which may tax is bound to regulate expenditures. But that is not all. State legislation governing the schools does not invade the principle of home rule. The common school system is in no sense a local system. The schools in the largest cities are subject to the same authority as the schools in the mountain regions. That authority may administer them under one set of legal regulations and by one class of officers in one place and by other regulations and other officers in another place, but they never cease to be the common schools of the State. The

State sets up the machinery to make certain that schools of suitable character are maintained in all places. If any city or district has the will and the wealth to go farther than the State requires, no one objects, but all cities and all districts must go as far. The legislative power has the clear authority and is charged with the manifest responsibility of legislating upon the administration of the whole system. This is an important principle in public school administration. It has been established by consistent and harmonious legal action in practically all of the States where the question has become the subject of legislation or of judicial determination. I have no doubt of, indeed I think I recall, decisions of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to this effect. Legislation regulating the administration of the schools in the city of Philadelphia is logical and in accord with the established and legal order of things underlying the common school system.

New legislation is needed unless there has been radical action since the city came to such large proportions and the schools to such great importance. The trouble in many school systems is that the business to be managed has altogether outgrown the organization for managing it. There are school boards in a dozen American cities managing more property, spending more money and making more appointments to positions than is the case with the governments in a dozen American States. Those boards very commonly are without specific legal directions and without check upon their action. Often the members are without public experience. Reasoning that they owe something to a party which gave them place, anxious to show their neighbors that they can bring about results, they stagger along through a devious course which makes fraud quite possible and certainly promotes confusion, injustice and inefficiency in all the operations of the schools.

PRINCIPLES TO BE UPHELD

This is not a place for me to attempt to present legislative measures for the good of a school system of whose con-

ditions I have very little exact knowledge. Nor is it the place to lay down principles about which experienced men unselfishly interested in the schools would have differences or misgivings. But it may doubtless be said with conservatism that the following principles must be asserted, must be enforceable by law before the educational rights of the people can have any promise of being satisfied:

1. The Board of Education must be small in numbers and the members must not be chosen by or for a district of the city, but must represent all the people and every educational interest of the city.

2. There must be a complete separation of legislative and executive functions. The board must have legislative powers only. Its functions should be discharged by passing resolutions to be entered in full upon its published journal. It must have no appointments, at least it must not have the initiative concerning any appointments beyond its clerk and the heads of business and instructional departments.

3. The actual doing of things must be left to executive officers. At least two executive departments are necessary, one to manage the business affairs and the other the instruction. The two must be sharply separated. These two departments must each have a strong and experienced man at its head, and he must have free and ample powers and must be held responsible.

4. The head of the business department must be charged with the appointment of all clerks, janitors and employees, with the care of all property and with the making and execution of all contracts. He should have nothing to do with passing resolutions and the board nothing to do with executing them. His term of office should be a long one and the law should amply protect him. He should get his directions from the law and the resolutions, and he should never be able to plead that he lacked authority or means to execute the high functions of his office. He should be directed by law to make all his appointments wholly irrespective of political, official or other influence and wholly upon business

principles. His appointments should be for an indefinite time. For any acts or any neglects which violate his directions he should be removable by the three-fourths vote of the board and punishable by the courts.

5. The Superintendent of Instruction should be chosen for his learning, his special knowledge of good pedagogy, his intellectual forcefulness, his steadiness, his rational outlook and sense of justice, his good nature and stout backbone, his experience in administration, his gifts for construction and his ability to make himself the best representative and exponent of common school interests of a cosmopolitan community. Few men meet these specifications; but there are some who do. The man who comes nearest to it and who is available should be found, and the conditions should be fixed so as to bring him to the high opportunity and the great service. The fact that he was not so fortunate as to have been born or to have lived in the city of Philadelphia or the State of Pennsylvania should not be an insurmountable obstacle to his appointment.

6. The Superintendent of Instruction must have his status fixed by law and not left to the caprice of a board. Up to this time he has been left almost wholly without legal protection against conditions which must wear his life to the breaking point and surely overwhelm him if his physical or official life lasted until the situation grew large enough. He must have a definite and long tenure of office with free powers and full accountability. The members of the board must know that they are not expected to have his expert knowledge or wide experience, and that they are not to appoint or meddle with or redress the grievances or aid the personal interests of teachers. If they are not large-minded enough to help him make his success possible they are to be prohibited by law from doing things which must humiliate and in the end overthrow him.

7. The Superintendent of Instruction is to be charged with building up a competent, right-spirited, enthusiastic teaching force. If there is a bad spirit or worthless teaching

in any public schoolroom in the city he must be made to answer for it. To enable him to bear this great responsibility I think he should have the absolute power to appoint, assign to work and remove teachers. If a community will not go to this length it may compromise upon appointments being made by a board of examiners or assistant superintendents, or probably by the Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, but I think experience amply shows these compromise expedients to invade a sound principle and provide only partial remedies of a rampant evil. At all events there is no hope at all unless the right of initiative concerning appointments upon the instructional force is clearly with the Superintendent and the power of removal is his absolutely. When one man has the responsibility of appointments he will guard admissions to the teaching service. A teacher, no matter how unfit, who has not committed some overt act positively criminal or immoral, can never be removed when it is left to the affirmative action of a board. No one finds pleasure in removing a teacher, but when one experienced man must take the matter upon his conscience and answer to the high interests that are at stake he will let judgment and conscience have their way.

8. There must be recognition of artistic teaching in all the lower as well as in the upper grades. There must be promotion on the basis of merit. There must be advance of pay with length of competent service. Self-respecting independence must be encouraged. There must be opportunity for the play of individual genius through freedom in the teaching. The point of equipoise between individualism and safe general results must be found. Self-seeking must be repelled and self-improvement exacted. There must be a leadership which commands respect and carries the whole mass into the very heart of a community's regard. There is not much hope of real excellence unless every teacher is proud to be associated with the system and unless every true citizen feels like removing his hat to one who is.

9. There must be publicity about all that is done. The

purposes and the plans for attaining them must be published and declared. For example, the Superintendent will make no appointment unless fixed standards of intellectual qualifications are reached. He must also exact pedagogical training. A city which would have a school system of marked excellence must be training teachers for its own service. This much must precede a trial: then a continuing appointment must wait upon proved success. It must all be explained again and again. It must all be kept in print ready for convenient distribution. The system must have policies of its own and be assertive, even aggressive about them. Of course its policies must be open and above board, and it must adhere to them without any exceptions. There are men who think that published policies are only to throw dust in the eyes of the public; that there are to be secret passages and dark-lantern processes to gain selfish ends. If there are any, the whole system will know it, and the whole enterprise will be stranded. If there is complete integrity about it, the teaching will have new life in it and the spirit of the force will rise with a bound.

10. The city must treat its teachers with full justice. It must not provoke movements for self-protection among the teachers. It must leave no excuse for organizations to increase pay and control the policies or the officers of the system. Organizations for self-improvement are all right; organizations for selfish ends are all wrong. There should be no just ground for them, and where there is none, they should not be allowed. With a weak administration, honeycombed with favoritism and injustice, they will germinate naturally and have to be allowed. All these things are earmarks of the soundness or of the decrepitude of a school system.

CENTRALIZATION

Some will object that there is too much centralization of power in all this. There is much, but no more than conditions demand and experience makes imperative. Moreover, we have had some very confused notions about the rights of the citizen. He has the right to good schools, not the right

to organize and superintend them in person. If all were to have the right of superintendence the schools could not be good ones. The making of courses of study, and the appointment and supervision of teachers, cannot be done by popular vote. Is democracy to be put to harder tests than more consolidated forms of government, and still expected to succeed? A democracy determines through its established and representative assemblages what shall be done. It may have to leave some things to the discretion of its representatives. It will leave no more to discretion than the circumstances require. When it has decided just what shall be done, it will set one man to do it if one man can do it. It will not set more than one man to execute its will, or more than one man to execute such part of its will as one man can execute, because it wants to give credit for doing things well and it wants to hold someone responsible if the thing is not done at all or is not well done. We have learned, out of abundant experience, that the citizens' rights in the schools are not secure unless they have a legal organization suited to conditions which they have developed, unless specified things are to be done, and unless, in case those things are not done in the way democracy has directed, the citizen may go down street and point his finger right at the man whose dereliction is overthrowing the popular will, and robbing him of his citizen's right.

APPOINTMENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In all this discussion I have not yet touched upon one point which is perhaps crucial in the whole matter. That is the manner of choosing the Board of Education. What is to be the method of appointment which will ensure good men who are adapted to such a service? I am sure I do not know. The best intelligence of a community will have to settle that and sue at the bar of the legislature and take its chances.

Yet much will depend upon the declared functions of the school board and the common thought over the whole matter.

If the board is not to make any appointments the mere patronage hunters will lose interest in it. If it does not have the making and execution of contracts the mere plunderers will have small use for it. If it is to be a small body and do its business in quiet tones while sitting around a council table, the oratorical nuisances who are everlastingly talking to the galleries are hardly likely to gravitate to it. If it is not charged with managing teachers or with the review of the acts of superintendents up to the time when they are put upon trial for incompetency or malfeasance, then the disgruntled or the degenerates are not likely to assail the members much, and if they do the board is hardly likely to fall down and worship them for the only reason that they have votes.

The men who draw statutes are lawyers. Lawyers are too apt to regard only the bone and sinew of the law. They are not much given to sentiment and too often lose sight of the spirit of the law. At least they are too prone to think that it is unlawyerlike to say much about that in legal forms. I think if there were more in school statutes to express the spirit and purpose, that spirit and purpose would be carried out more fully in their execution. This would more certainly be so when their execution depends upon people who are not lawyers. And accordingly I have the idea that if the law should express with some fulness the qualities which are expected in a school board and place the responsibility of appointment upon a single officer who in some sense represents all the interests of the community, better results are likely to be attained than will be reached in any other way.

This much I do know, a city school system needs peace and quietness and stability and steadiness. It is sensitive to excitement and uproar. If it cannot call to its highest service men who can bring substance and confidence to it there is small hope of very exceptional results.

CONCLUSION

Coming to a conclusion, the thought comes to me that possibly I have assumed too much knowledge of the school work of this great city. I know, only in a general way, of the more important facts touching the school organization of the city. This little knowledge may have proved a dangerous thing. But I did not begin to think of such matters only a day or two ago, and I have never known a case where the general plan of organization was anything like what it is here without finding much demoralization and dissatisfaction in the teaching force and much worthless work in the schools. The plan of organization is far from being everything in a great school system, but a system of government which is vicious or one which is weak because outgrown is prohibitive of the best spirit and of first excellence in the work of the schools. Not much in the way of better things can be accomplished until there is a plan of school government which will give to good and experienced administrators the power to drive out the plunderers and place seekers on the one hand, while on the other they may lay out work which is balanced, teach it scientifically, and give the community's commendation to the men and women who render it an unselfish and a meritorious public service.

And I may add that even when such a form of government is established not much will be accomplished until it is in the hands of men and women who have the experience and the moral strength to execute it without fear or favor, but with full justice, with a sane outlook, with a comprehensive grasp upon the heaviest and most imperative task of democratic government.

It is upon this knowledge that I have proceeded. And I prefer to say specifically that I should grieve to think that the Superintendent of Schools of Philadelphia, whose learning and character I have respected and whose pleasant acquaintance I have cherished these many years, or any of the good and conscientious teachers of the city, should construe anything that has been said into a reflection upon them. What

they have done, and surely it has been much, should be doubly to their credit because accomplished in spite of the many influences which have hindered rather than helped the always burdensome work of the schools.

This is a great, a very great city. It has a high and an honored place in the esteem of all Americans. It has great business enterprises. It has noble institutions. It has endless streets of comfortable and beautiful homes. It is rich, very rich in historic reminiscence and significance. Commerce and wealth and art and letters and song and story abound here. But I know, and you know, this is but a one-sided view of the city's life. Indeed these very things keep the best men and women of the city from seeing and knowing the other side, or from doing what they might do very effectually to help all sides find the greatest good in our democratic and cosmopolitan life.

The largest interests this thrifty city has center in its boys and girls. They will, before we know it, be giving substance to its business, and tone to its spirit and character to its public life. They are entitled to be studied scientifically, and managed with gentility, and inspired to ambitious and noble things. Men and women with small realization of a teacher's responsibility, with an exploded and outlawed notion of a teacher's functions, are not to terrify them with fuming and strutting and scolding and thrashing. Their self-activities are to be encouraged and directed. They are to have the best in literature, and their imagination is to be excited. Companionship is to be sought and confidence established. They are to be given work they may like to do. Their pleasure is to be studied and their enthusiasm rewarded. They are to do things with their hands and learn the satisfaction of actual accomplishment. They are not to have all the facts it may ever be well for them to know stuffed into them ; the taste for information, the power to do are to be started and the rest will take care of itself. The slow are to have special help ; the bright are not to be kept eight years doing things which they might just as well do in six. What they

know is not to be settled by a superintendent's written examination alone. They are to have false notions of the worth of the individual man and of the relations of the individual to the mass taken out of them. They are to be taught toleration, the great and imperative lesson of religious, political, industrial and social toleration is to sink deep into their souls through an association which is wholesome and a competition which calls out the best they have. Shams are to be ridiculed. The truth is to be sought; if it can be brought out through the agency of the child so much the better. Culture is not to be put above truth and strength. Culture alone does not make for accomplishment. Work is culturing. Character grows where truth is the criterion and where labor is dignified. All these things go to the enrichment of the city. They are all imperative to the stability of the State.

It is all to be done by teachers, by thousands of capable and right spirited teachers. The highest rights of citizens are ignored if there are some who cannot manage and others who cannot teach. Ah! school administration is not a pastime. Perhaps we shall never gain our ideal, but we shall go to the bad unless we have it and work for it. The burden is upon constitutional government. Kings may bear it, through the exercise of arbitrary power and having in view only the narrow ends of the kingship, very easily. But the people of a democracy must expect to find it the most delicate and exacting and imperative responsibility which weighs upon their public life. And it is not too much to say that the people of one of the great cities in such a democracy must come to know that the way in which they meet it will be proof of the power of the democracy to do, and perhaps the proof of the right of the democracy to be.

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